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AUTHOR Tran, Dien Ngoc
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ABSTRACT

Viet Nam's average annual population growth rate is 2.6%, which accounts for a large youth population: 37.7% of the total population is under age 15, compared with an average of 20% in developed or newly industrialized countries. A free basic education for all children is almost impossible to provide. With consideration of the Vietnamese people's culture and heritage and the nation's traditional political organization, this paper proposes some approaches toward a new educational system based on a new theory of education which blends Eastern classical philosophy with Western schools of thought, from the Enlightenment period to John Dewey and Paulo Freire to critical theory and Michel Foucault's and the postmodernists' works. Following an overview, the paper's arguments involve a comparison of Viet Nam's educational system with countries of similar population. Following methods selected from the comparative education field, the paper focuses on the eight steps Brian Holmes (1965) suggests in drawing on Dewey's problem solving. It proposes a solution based on the researcher's observations and on study of the achievements of Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and Turkey. Contains 8 tables, 10 notes, and 58 references. (BT)

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A SELF-SUSTAINED EDUCATION SYSTEM
FOR A DEVELOPING COUNTRY:
THE CASE OF
THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM

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by

Dien Ngoc Tran

Faculty of Education

The University of Western Ontario

1137 Western Road

London, Ontario N6G 1G7

Canada

e-mail: dntran@julian.uwo.ca

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1. Introduction

Viet Nam has an estimated population of 74 million (Brunner, 1999) with an average annual growth rate of 2.6%. This high growth rate, typical of a developing country, accounts for the large proportion of young people--those under 15 represent 37.73% of the total population--compared to an average of less than 20% in the developed or new industrialized countries¹. This large proportion of young people places a burden on the rest of the population who has to care for and provide basic services for them. Such a burden weighs heavily on the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam's government (SRV) which is facing more problems than it can handle in political and social reforms.

The SRV government's commitment to provide free basic education to all children is almost impossible to implement, and the growing illiteracy rate among its adult population can only paint a grim picture of the nation's future. Viet Nam would not be able to join the rank of its new industrialized neighbours in the South and in the North East.

With consideration of the Vietnamese people's culture and heritage and the nation's traditional political organization, this paper proposes some approaches towards a new educational system based on a new theory of education which blends Eastern classical philosophy with Western schools of thoughts, from the Enlightenment period, through to John Dewey and Paulo Freire, to critical theory and Michel Foucault's and the postmodernists' works. Such a gigantic task would not be feasible without the full participation of both government and population, so tapping the moral and physical resources of the population and the willingness for social reform of the government are of crucial importance. The hope is that, for their own survival, the people of Viet Nam will be willing to stand up to such an endeavour.

2. Literature review and methodology

a. Literature review

During the second Indochina war, when both North (the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam - DRV) and South Viet Nam (the Republic of Viet Nam - RVN) were engaged heartily into each other and suffered heavily from the destructing belligerent acts, one thing stood out as a remarkable social achievement. Both countries maintained a high literacy rate and an educational system, which offered to the vast

majority of the citizens, not only basic education, but also a surprising universal access to secondary and tertiary institutions. (Vu Tam Ich, Merton)

In 1975 when North Viet Nam succeeded in taking over South Viet Nam, and imposed in 1976 the reunification of the two parts to become the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam (SRV), education suddenly and slowly deteriorated. Writers who are more than sympathetic to the regime must also confess that

On the other hand, there are still important quantitative and qualitative imbalances between urban and rural zones, and between the plains and the mountainous areas. (Le Thanh Khoi, 1988: 719)

In 1990, in its own version of a "Mea Culpa", the SRV lamented about the near bankruptcy state of its education system, and asked for help from the United Nations Development Programme (Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 1990). In the same year, Jacqueline Desbarats pointed out a blatant discrimination in educational opportunities

... candidates to examination for admission to universities and technical high schools are classified into seven categories depending on their social and family backgrounds.

Different passing grades are required of students in each category; thus the higher the group category, the lower the grade required to pass the examination. Students in categories I and II--party cadres and their children--have top priority and can pass their examinations with a grade of only 16 points out of a total of 30. For students in category III--children of common people--the minimum passing grade is 25.5. (p. 48)

In 1997, the Asian Development Bank observed

All communes and most villages have a primary school, albeit often of poor standard.

The numbers of facilities available decline at higher level of education ...

... minorities are under-represented in education, accounting for only about 4 percent of total enrollments, compared with the estimated minority share of at least 15 percent of the school age population, with low enrollment of minority girls. (p. 3)

The causes if the poor quality (in education) include inappropriate curriculum, inadequate textbooks and instructional materials, and poorly trained teachers. (p. 6)

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Inadequate access to quality lower secondary education is the result of a shortage of physical facilities, the poor quality of school buildings, and a shortage of support facilities. (p. 8)

Very diplomatic, the Bank did not mention the government's roles and responsibilities in all that.

Fortunately, there are solutions for this hopeless situation. Ocitti introduces an example of indigenous education which draws on the contribution of the communities for its success. Jill Lambert (p. 607) recognizes that the problems faced by the Socialist government of Viet Nam in education, especially in higher education are mostly the same "issues that Western universities have encountered in the previous years." Ali Arayici demonstrates that rural education is very important to the developing countries as it can make their peasants literate as well as guide them "on the road of economic, social and cultural progress." (p. 268) He supports his observation with examples from the village institutes in Turkey. Jandhyala Tilak points out that "poverty of education becomes an integral part of human poverty" (p. 518), and that high and constant investment in education, like in the case of Sri-Lanka, pays rich dividends. (p. 519)

Thus there may be a way out of the educational maze the SRV is trapping itself in. Raja Singh exposes a fundamental concept, widely spread in Asia

The perfection of learning is sharing; the more one learns, the greater the desire to share. In the Asian cultural traditions, the sharing of knowledge, wisdom and learning is the prime responsibility of the elder, of anyone who has received the gift of knowledge, of anyone who has mastered an art or a skill, of the wise man, of the sage.

Learning to learn should surely prepare for learning to share. (p. 16)

Building a new education system can be based on this philosophy: sharing, caring and nurturing. Towards this end, the government can tap the moral and human resources of the whole population, provided that the government can demonstrate a genuine desire to work for the people's happiness, for their citizens' benefit, and not to reap all profits and keep them solely for the ruling class.

Lakomski (pp. 168-9) suggests that we reconsider the relationship between theory and practice, and apply critical theory in examining educational administration. Schools must be studied in all their complexities, by the method of "cultural analysis" with emphasis on understanding and critical reflection, and all this, according to the words of Giroux "the notions of culture ... a political force ... a powerful moment in the process of domination" (Giroux, 1983, p. 31).

Allen Scott goes further in suggesting that peaceful reform is possible in new types of local political institutions and forms of social harmony may develop. As such, the socialist government should allow a more democratic participation of all its citizens, a not too difficult approach if the socialist government lives up to its definition-slogan "a government from the people, for the people, and working within the people." Implementing the new education system is made easier by adopting Lucien Cribble's suggestions on the requirements for a democratic education organization. Santosh Mehrota proposes ways to improve cost-effectiveness by mobilizing resources for primary education, and from reducing the gap between allocation of resources between primary and tertiary education levels. Although Mehrota draws his examples from Sub-Saharan African states, the transposition of his methods is not out of the Vietnamese context

In Africa, public expenditure per university student is equivalent to government spending on about thirty five primary school students. The corresponding ratio for Asia and Latin America varies between eight and fifteen for 1980-82. (p. 480) [*In Viet Nam that ratio is between 11 and 19, see appendix A, table 8*]

Thus there are serious problems within the education system in Viet Nam to be expanded in the next part of this paper. Following this, part 3 establishes the foundation of the solution, and part 4 exposes the different steps of a solution. The proposed solution for a self-sustained education system addresses the defined problems, takes into account the experiences in this field from other countries, aims at a realistic implementation, refined through critical thinking, and works toward the realization of children's rights in education according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Mason, p. 182-3)

b. Methodology

Although the paper deals solely with one country, the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, the arguments involve the comparison of its educational system with others countries which have either the same population or the same population density. Thus I follow methods selected from the comparative education field. I focus first on the eight steps Brian Holmes (1965) suggests in drawing on Dewey's problem-solving as a method of investigation. They are first adopted to refine the problem, and to arrive at a reasonable solution. The eight steps are: (1) selection of a problem; (2) identification of possible solutions; (3) reflection on the problem, leading to a clearer formulation; (4) analysis of the

context of the problem; (5) advancement of hypotheses on policy choice; (6) testing of hypotheses; (7) drawing of conclusions; and (8) reexamination of the processes.

I am aware of the fallacy of a single method, no matter how compact and logical this method may be, and understand that Holmes' eight steps cannot treat all the different aspects encountered in a study in education. During the research, I have to move between quality and quantity, accepting statistics as what they are, looking critically at what the authorities who provided them want me to believe without losing their true meanings. I must rely on experts' writings, and to evaluate them according to their intentions and to the degree of their observation. In doing that, I must also control myself and not let my own (not too positive) feelings towards the present regime in Viet Nam obliterate my judgment. In viewing the documents, articles, and books, I would also look into the legitimization professed by both the government and from the authors. In short, I try not to distort dialogues from texts, and not to believe without sufficient examination of the presented truth from any sources.

My research is not totally based on descriptive and historical studies, as they are not enough for my study (Bereday, 1964; Kandel, 1933). The solution I propose requires some developmental studies, and involves the examination of the "equality of educational opportunity programs, built around ideas of social justice" (Keeves & Adams, p. 951), concepts that I profess in the light of Dewey and Freire's works, and in the tradition of the UNESCO's Charter of Human Right (1948) and Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). As suggested by Noah, I try to interpret results and statistics within the context of the studies, and not to make a case of my observation, assimilation and reporting. As for ethnocentrism, I try to look at the problems from within the Vietnamese culture and realities, with the eyes of a detached observer with almost no ties to the country and the people.

I am aware of the difficulties that foreign scholars who do not speak the country's language may encounter in collecting data, and must rely solely either on the official sources or through the assistance of interpreters and translators. I am also aware that the new generation of scholars, very knowledgeable in their fields of studies, may not have the time to get an in depth understanding of the history and the culture of the country they are visiting. They may only come into contact of what the authority wants them to see. I believe that many scholars are keen enough to see through the lines or the screens, however, I must shift carefully through their observations and reports with a critical reflection, so I would not do them any unfair evaluation.²

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The solution I propose is based partly on my own observations, my own knowledge about a country I know, and on the recall of the previous education I once inherited in many different settings (rural, urban, provincial ...). I also look at the achievements that Sri-Lanka, the Philippines, Turkey and a few other developing countries have attained during the last two decades. I believe that this is the true goal of comparative education: to learn from different countries' successes, and to transfer the learned lessons, with the necessary restructuring changes with regards to environment, culture, human and physical resources, to tackle the defined problems and improve the education system of the selected country, whose citizens would be able to participate as members of a free and humane world.

3. The education system in Viet Nam and its problems (1995)

a. Assessing the system

Before 1975, North and South Viet Nam had two distinct education systems. In the South, the 1957 constitution made primary education (grade 1 to 5) free and compulsory. Secondary education was divided into a four-year First Cycle topped by the First Cycle diploma and followed by a three-year Second Cycle with streaming in the last two years into Natural Sciences, Mathematics, Literature and Ancient Languages. Adult education and literacy continued to be implemented especially in the provinces and rural areas. Eighty to eighty-five per cent of the population was literate, according to UNESCO experts in 1973 (Merton, 1974). The government recognized the shortfall in providing education for all school-aged children so it granted subventions to some private schools, making them semi-private to lower the tuition fees. Universities were also reorganized. Since 1961, Vietnamese has been used as the official teaching language in most faculties. The first private university was established in Dalat in 1958, and by 1975 there were nine universities of which five were private (Nguyen Quoc Thang, chapter 7).

In the North, the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam established a ten-year curriculum based on the Soviet education system. Primary education was compulsory in its 1946 constitution. In 1956, the government started a vigorous mass education programme, which was hampered by the lack of qualified teachers and instructors.³ Following the example of countries in Eastern Europe, the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam made education a state affair and abolished all private schools. The Vietnamese language was used at all educational levels. Higher education was mostly obtained in the former USSR.

Although both sides were facing a raging war, education was held in high priority by both governments. The Vietnamese, loyal to their tradition, treated the *educated* persons with respect and held them in high esteem. (Tran, 129)

Since 1975, the education systems in both parts of the reunified country have faced dramatic changes. In the North, student enrolment in secondary and tertiary schools increased far beyond government's planning. This increase can be explained as reflecting the pent up wartime demand and the search for new career opportunities. However schools could not be built overnight and qualified teachers could not be easily trained through crash courses. The demand for a better education was not met as the authorities were slow in responding to these legitimate aspirations.

In the South, the Communist made life very difficult for the teachers from the old regime. Always suspicious to this *petite bourgeoisie*, the winners invented schemes to re-educate the teachers and to purge the educational system of all capitalist influences. To create an environment which would provide the most access to education for the working class, the Communist Party proclaimed that "education must be unified in terms of its substance and organization and placed under state management" (Nguyen Ho, Deputy Chairman of the National Liberation Front Committee, Saigon, October 1975).

A total of 1,087 private schools were (then) nationalized, and reopened as public schools in October as public schools, under a single state education policy. (Nguyen van Canh 1983, 157)

It seems now that this move was not in the right direction. Economic, social and political mistakes further reduced the national wealth, and education suffered more than any other sector. Teachers' income fell far behind the rate of inflation, and teachers had to moonlight in order to provide for their families, thus precious time and energy were diverted from their teaching duties. By 1980, close to half of the pre-1975 teachers had resigned or fled overseas (Marr, 338). Even the observers most favourable to the regime could only remark

In the academic year 1986-87, virtually all adult education was abandoned and there were reports of the return of illiteracy in rural and mountainous areas. Meanwhile, 25,000 school teachers left their jobs, both for inadequate compensation and for lack of security in the classroom. Many of those who stayed were incompetent. At the end of the academic year 1987-1988, only 53 per cent of middle-school students passed

their final exams, compared to 80 per cent in the academic year 1986-1987. (Huynh, 1989, 3)

In 1990, in Hochiminh City alone, 2,000 teachers did not return to their posts as the school year began. The government could not rely on teacher training to fill these openings. In 1993, actual enrolment of student-teachers attained only fifty per cent of the projected figure (Table 1)

Table 1
Students Enrolment in Different Teacher Training Institutions in Saigon

	Number of students		
	Projected	Selected	Enrolled
Teacher School	700	534	468
Teacher College	400	395	300
Faculty of Pedagogy	950	993	286
Total	2,050	1,922	1,054

Source: Ministry of Education and Training - July 1993

As family incomes must be kept in pace with inflation, often parents were forced to keep their children home for at least part of the school year to help boost the family economy, instead of investing in the children's future by sending them to school. Retention and drop-out rates proceeded to rise. In the 1985 school-year, only 18.5 per cent of the age-group children remained in grade 9 (Fraser, 194).

As many as 20 per cent of children enrolling in grade 1 did not progress to grade 2. Meanwhile, for every one hundred students starting grade 1 in the school-year 1982-83, only 56 made through grade 5 in 1986-87. And out of these 56, only 24 passed the middle-school exams!

Illiteracy, often claimed by the government as a thing of the past, reappeared and the illiteracy rate seemed to increase year after year. The government had to concede that the illiteracy rate ran as high as 16% among the population over 15 years of age (21.7 for the female population), and that over 45 per cent of the population over 55 years of age were considered illiterate (Report of the Economy of Viet Nam, 1990). Perhaps the change in defining literacy⁴ accounted somewhat for this increase, but the official figure of 8.3 million adults being illiterate might send out a strong signal that education was in trouble. And indeed it was, for in the first nine months of 1990, only 80,000 persons in the whole country attended literacy classes (Marr, 342 and Fraser, 199).

b. Defining the problems

(1) Difficulty of universal access

Access to education was influenced by a series of external factors, mainly related to the economic factors. With less than 3 per cent of the GNP allocated to education, the system could barely maintain existing school buildings and provide for the current classes. Attempts to increase the percentage of GNP allotted to education were rejected.⁵ The contribution from the population through taxes, levies and mandatory fees had reached its limits. Since 1988, children had to pay a school fee to cope with the shortfall of public funds.

There are no fees for the first three years of primary school. For the 4th, 5th and 6th classes, the fee is the equivalent of 1.5 kilos of rice each month, for the lower secondary school the equivalent of 2 kilos of rice and for the upper secondary school the equivalent of 3 kilos of rice. In the future, school fees are likely to be increased. (Report on the Economy of Viet Nam, 1990).

Theoretically, there were no fees for the first three years, but parents were required to contribute to the maintenance of the school building, the well-being of the staff, i.e., teachers, but mostly for the administrative and support staff who ran the school ... Parents who wanted to enrol their children in nursery schools or crèches must also pay to ensure that their children received proper cares.

Access to pre-primary and primary schools is made more difficult by the concentration of schools. The tables 5, 6 and 7 in Appendix A demonstrate that Viet Nam has the highest numbers of pupils and teachers per schools compared with representative countries in the area. This may be interpreted as pupils must walk longer distances to schools, making access to education more

challenging. Thus financial burdens and geographical barriers create more hurdles for the poor. Equal access to education cannot be implemented in these conditions.

(2) Imbalance of educational services

In 1988, there were over 40,000 crèches in Viet Nam. 32,000 were located in the North, and 8,000 in the South. Added to this imbalance between the North and South, 80 per cent of these registered crèches were found only in urban areas. In the general education cycle 1, the southern provinces accounted for over 52 per cent of all the enrolled students but were staffed with only 47 per cent of the teacher force. The pupil-teacher ratio was 38:1 in the South as compared to 31:1 in the North. The same imbalance existed in Cycle 2, with the South accounting for 48 per cent of students, and only 39 per cent of the available teacher force (Fraser, 196). The imbalance was more obvious in the tertiary education. Most party members came from the North, and their children benefited from the quota system which reserved a number of places in selected faculties (as high as 50 per cent) for them (Desbarats 1990, Library of Congress, 1988).

In the August 1997 Report and Recommendation regarding a proposed loan to the SRV, the President wrote:

Educational participation and achievement are lower in remote and mountainous areas in general, especially for ethnic minorities; minorities are under represented in education, accounting for only about 4 percent of total enrollments, compared with the estimated minority share of at least 15 percent of the school age population, with low enrollment of minority girls.

(Asian Development Bank, Report, 3)

The same report indicated that the SRV government applied for a loan to upgrade lower secondary education in ten provinces, of which five were in North Viet Nam, around Hanoi. Imbalance in providing educational services to all might not happen by chance or by sheer coincidence, but by deliberate planning. The problem was very complex, but lack of official statistics prevented deeper investigation.

(3) Uncoordinated national planning

In 1990, four agricultural colleges turned out 1,200 agronomists, and while the Party declared that agriculture was the "forefront of the economic battle", the Ministry of Agriculture refused to recruit any of these new college graduates! With the new policy on foreign investment firmly in place, and with the Party's emphasis on legal reforms, Law College graduates were still unable to find jobs related to their training. Most of them became unofficial tour guides!

The government was well aware that the mass exodus between 1978 and 1980 deprived the nation of its skilled labour force, but little was done to replace this experienced workforce. In the 1989 census, only 10 per cent of the workforce was declared to have some formal training. 90 per cent admitted that they had no formal qualifications at all (Marr, 342). In the countryside, 50 per cent of the 27 million citizens of working age had not finished the basic education cycle 1 (which means that they did not finish grade 5). It is little wonder that new agricultural techniques and technologies could not be successfully or appropriately implemented.

In 1990, the three ministries of Higher Education, Education and Vocational and Job Training were amalgamated into a single Ministry of Education and Training. This Ministry will soon celebrate its tenth anniversary, but realities are not bright:

teachers remained sadly underpaid, battered textbooks had to be shared among different pupils, essential materials such as slate board, desks, papers, pencils, and maps were in short supply, and many schools lacked any library books, basic laboratory equipment or sport gear. (Marr, 342)

(4) Unnecessary political mystification

The Socialist Republic of Viet Nam can be proud of its secrecy in record keeping. No data was made available to outside sources, especially the data which may reveal an education system in trouble. For years, the UNESCO Statistical Yearbook had no information regarding the SRV. The Report on the Economy of Viet Nam--by the State Planning Committee, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, submitted to the United Nations Development Programme in 1990--was the first substantial report, and gave a grim picture of the educational situation in Viet Nam. Other data could only be collected through different ministries and often with a delay which rendered them obsolete and unusable. Often, the data once sorted and compared with other sources, are not usable, as they contradict each other. Birz a (1994) had warned that this information system provided no foundation for efficient and accurate

planning. The SRV is trapped in its own game, and often seems to be contradicting itself.⁶ The lack of accurate statistics forces the planning process to rely on traditional means of an inefficient and corrupted administration:

arbitrary measures, improvisations, favouritism, concentration of power, nepotism, abuse of all sorts ... (Birzéa, translation by the author)

The education system in today's Viet Nam retains these particular problems. They stem from the absorption of two different education systems, which can be termed as the residual consequences from colonial times. The system in the South was moulded after the French elitism and the non traditional American one. The system in the North bore the Chinese and Russian stamps. In the aftermath of two long wars, unhealed wounds did little to further national reconciliation. The winners wanted to impose its model, and the losers reacted, for the sake of reacting, and both sides forgot that rebuilding the nation should be their top priority. This became a deeper problem due to the hastily planned (or unplanned) reunification of two unequal partners. All this happened at a time where all crystal balls lost their transparency: in the last ten years, the ever-changing world underwent more precipitous changes than in the previous 40 years.

4. The proposed solution

a. Proposing the philosophy

Under the present government, education as well as other activities must toe the Marxism-Leninism line of conducts. The VCP, through General Secretary Le Duan, dictated that "all children and young people should pass all the degrees of general education." The aim of education in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam is to train a new labour force having revolutionary morality, scientific and technological knowledge, technical capacity and good health to respond to the needs of the socialist construction. (Nguyen van Canh, 1983, 146). There would be no other education tendency, as the 1980's Constitution affirmed that "the state has the sole responsibility for education." (Chapter 3, article 41). This has not changed in subsequently reformed constitutions.

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Marxism-Leninism is well known for its totalitarian and inflexible approach. Marx wished to educate the young generation to become new communists, free of social and moral (religious and or superstition) oppression, that is new people who will fight for the common good of humankind and forsake their own happiness. But Marx was too optimistic in believing that education could transform human beings into that idealistic person. He focussed solely on the innate good side, neglecting the evil side which is also innate to the human race. Thus, instead of creating the new communist person to work towards world peace and universal happiness, Marxism (and its undeniable burden Leninism) could only turn the once so-called oppressed class into a multi-layer of oppressors who inflict different levels of oppression, on their "brothers and sisters", depending on their places within the party strata. The top-down bureaucracy, the heavy burden of a over-centralized should be abolished. (Porter, 1993)

Thus Marxism-Leninism should be rejected as the foundation of the new education system. Viet Nam's society was not constructed as a monotheistic society, but as a society in which at least three (and more exactly four) main religions can co-exist and co-operate. (Toan Anh, Lê and Huard). So Viet Nam cannot apply Paulo Freire's early works as in *Education for the Oppressed* which is based on the rural, catholic organisation of the peasantry. However, in Freire's later works (1994, 1998) there were elements which could be adapted to the situation in Viet Nam. In the same line of reasoning, John Dewey's *My Pedagogic Creed*, which is suitable to a Western monocultural and monotheistic society, would not be appropriate for Viet Nam. Dewey's *Democracy and Education* would be an addition to the proposed philosophy in order to provide the democratic foundation for the education system. We should also be aware of both Freire and Dewey's optimistic (in a sense not too far off Marx's optimism) trust in the seemingly good nature of humankind. Safeguards should be built into the philosophy, to prevent the oppressed from becoming a new batch of oppressors, who continue to perpetuate the struggle between oppressed and oppressors in a vicious circle. Foucault, in rejecting Marx's inflexible structuralism, and in questioning Freire and Dewey's systems of thoughts, provided a solid base for critical thinking. His methods using the archeological and genealogical approaches could be used to investigate a new philosophy for designing a new education system, within a developing country, such as Viet Nam. (Olssen, 1999)

To replace the VCP's aim of education, we may propose that the new education system would seek to train the young generation (as well as the mature adults) into the modern person who is both:

* a problem solver in daily life situation, in family, in society and in the work place, using critical thinking, rational reasoning, and efficient communication with a moral and ethical awareness.

* a life-long learner who seeks to continuously improve one's abilities and qualities (virtues/habits) to enhance the quality of life for oneself and for the others within one's own environment.

The philosophy should then be left to the Vietnamese people to develop their own theory in the most democratic way possible. For in the end, it is clearly the people of Viet Nam who will be affected by this philosophy and its implementation. We can only suggest some avenues to examine, once the philosophy for a new education system is accepted by the consensus of all members of a population who are well aware of their potential and their power for change. By doing just that, we are following Freire's suggestion

"Donaldo, I don't want to be imported or exported. It is impossible to export pedagogical practices without reinventing them. Please tell your fellows American educators not to import me. Ask them to re-create and rewrite my ideas." (Freire, 1998, xi)

And we would attempt to transform the education system from its present state to an expected state as in table 2.

Table 2

Initial Stade	⇒	Expected State
Difficulty of universal access Imbalance of educational services Uncoordinated national planning Unnecessary political mystification High Illiteracy Rate Elaborated Elitist Education Low Satisfaction - No Motivation No Upward Mobility	<i>Freire</i> <i>Greene</i> <i>Harding</i> <i>Piaget</i> <i>Rousseau</i> <i>Vygotsky</i> <i>Dewey</i> ...	* Easy Access for All * True Equality * Cooperation in National Planning * Participatiry Democracy Low Illiteracy Rate Quality Mass Education Motivation & Satisfaction for All Advancement for All

In table 2, under *Expected State*, "All" certainly means children and adults of both genders. The neo-Confucianism concept of "male superiority" should be eradicated, and erased from the philosophy. Issues and concerns related to education for women in a patriarchal state, voiced by Maxine Greene, Sandra Harding, and especially Gail Kelly must be addressed so the curriculum, the organization, the schools could be as close to gender neutral as possible. (Biraimah, 1997)

The task is not easy for even Freire and Dewey have by-passed these issues or kept them under a wise silence. However, Vietnamese women in the diaspora are a source of role models, a group of helping hands, and a school of advocates for changes. I cannot be very optimistic here, as the issue of equity is still unsolved in many developed and developing countries, to include Brazil, Canada, France, Japan, India, Pakistan ... (cited in alphabetical order). But the issue should be looked upon, when the philosophy is to be formulated.

b. Tapping the traditional moral resource

The Vietnamese people are regarded as intelligent, hard working and realistic, without being materialistic. (Tran, 145)

Viet Nam was clearly a nation-state before Western powers came to its shore. (Huynh, 1982). Vietnamese society revolved around two components: the family as its unit and the village, as its moderator. The family, in its broadest definition, shaped the individual members, put them in their respective places and prepared them for life. The village, comprised of these closely knitted units, moderated, arbitrated, regulated the villagers' every move and served as the mediator between its members and the higher administrative authorities.

In contrast with the national political system of hereditary monarchy, the village leaders or notables were elected for a fixed term and had full power over the village life. As most Vietnamese were home-bound and spent their lives between their birth-place and their ancestors' tombs, their society was often reduced to their own village. The term *làng nuoc*, which properly meant "village-nation" was often used to designate the village alone and vested it with the sense of community. During the French domination, this traditional structure was slowly abolished. The traditional village retained only its look, and lost not only its prestige, but also its very essence and entity. To rebuild the country, the first suggested steps would be to reinstall the traditional family and the traditional village's structure.

Education could benefit largely from this renewal as the family would provide the informal indigenous education to its young members, and prepare them in a nurturing way for their next step into life.

Paulo learned to read with his parents, in the shade of the trees in the yard of the house in which he was born... His chalk was the twigs of the mango tree in whose shade he learned to read, and his blackboard was the ground. (Gadotti, 2)

This process seems quite romantic, but it was implemented in Ancient China, and was in use in Viet Nam until the end of the communal classical schools (1920's A.D.)

Such an education, or preschool formation would be tender, nurturing and not expensive, as in Paulo Freire's words, *it was a living, free, unpretentious preschool*. (Gadotti, 2)

To realize that revival of the family learning and teaching atmosphere, the proposed education system would start in an unorthodox way. Education should begin first with adults. The system would prepare adults to the new adult life. Adults need to be literate first, in order to transfer their knowledge to the next generation (Arayici, 269). Adult education should be geared to this task. The Vietnamese, like other races, possess good moral values which wait for the right opportunities to bloom. The government's job is to provide these opportunities, or at least, to create favourable conditions for them to materialize. This could be done by giving examples. As such, the first step is to tap the dormant traditional moral resource.

Expansion, even when carried out with the most noble intention, would always short-change quality. Adults, when appointed as teachers must receive training and orientation. Their effectiveness as rural school teachers should be regularly assessed. The evaluation must be done in a way that the teachers to be evaluated would not feel humiliated. The evaluation can be conducted in the same way of a physical annual check-up: to find out possible problems at an early stage so remedial actions can be taken, for the benefit of the teachers, of their pupils, and of the new education system as well. Evaluation should come after sufficient training and orientation, and should always provide the evaluated teachers with in-service upgrading programmes. And if the evaluation would also reward and encourage excellence in the teacher ranks and files, then teachers can look at evaluation with anticipation and excitement. The appraisal system should be evaluated, reviewed, and revised to be fair and considerate. The evaluation standards must be clear, and subjected to modification from teachers' and the public's inputs. (Rajput & Walia, 149)

c. Redefining the national structures

The SRV's government could be proud of its past victories over the two greatest world-powers, but the failure to match peacetime achievements to wartime exploits and the inability to live-up to its smallest and least significant economical and social promises have ruined the public's faith and trust. Without trust, all government's directives run into public indifference. Without faith, all initiatives are worthless. The government could learn from their predecessors about the art of ruling the country. In the past, the monarchy played a more ritualistic role, claiming that the royal ruler is the mediator between *Heaven* (as the king is considered as the Son of Heaven) and *Earth*. The ruler would fast, repent publicly, and implore for Heaven's mercy, should bad weather ruin the year crop. This was totally opposite to the present government's attitude as put forth by the peasants, "all bad crops are blamed on us and on the harsh and inclement weathers, while all good crops are hailed as the result of Party's policy."

The Party and the government would learn how to get rid of the *self-identity* they had inherited from Western communism and return to the traditional *greater-self*, (Radcliffe, 41 & 44) to immerse themselves with the majority of the population. When the Party ceases to be the leading (and self-isolating) factor and returns to the more modest, but also more efficient role of mediator and moderator, the nation will become united in this *neo federalism* of villages. Moral values and national pride would have a more appropriate ground on which to grow, for then moral values and national pride become the very motives of every responsible person, nurtured and cared for by the whole *village-nation*. The first step would be a redefining of the national structure to provide the population with a source of pride, a sense of belonging. All Vietnamese should be part of a caring and nurturing nation.

d. Reforming democratic participation

In its broadest sense, democracy is the full and unreserved participation of all members in making decision related to their life and their future, and the next generations' future. In such terms, the monarchies in the kingdoms of Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden as well as Great Britain could be seen as more democratic than some of the so-called democratic republics ... If the *village-nation* comes to existence in Viet Nam, democracy could flourish. A more elaborated structure would enhance the villages to fully participate in the national policy and decision-making process. Holding elections alone is not the solution for a democratic society. Education, especially civic

education, will extol the virtues of free and independent individuals who would voluntarily limit their rights and freedom to make room for acceptance of others, so that everyone can co-exist, live, and work in a caring and humane society. We would reinforce here Dewey's concept "Democracy must be lived, not merely taught!"

This reform is very difficult to achieve because, by their human nature, people tend not to give away what they have accumulated or possessed, even wealth which has been gained through illegal or immoral means. But government officials, by giving genuine examples, can lead the population toward a cleaner and better society, free of abuse and corruption. For this, I suggest that the government provides the people with a broader and more realistic consciousness of true democracy. The government may examine the Russian Democratic Education project. This project supplies teaching material in the form of a textbook on democracy to high-school students in Moscow. The main objective is not to instill democratic values, but to show the young generation what the essence of democracy is, and how this democracy can be implemented. The choice is then left to the students when they enter the real world. The project does not provide a model solution, but shows that there are possible alternatives to what was imposed previously in Russia. (Ray & Voskresenskaya, 1998) Viet Nam would also benefit from a similar project. The Vietnamese would learn that besides Marxism-Leninism, and the Stalinist-Maoist model, there are other political models they may adopt, so that they can fully and wholeheartedly contribute to the rebuilding of their society and their country. However, I truly believe that without a sound education system, it would be impossible to realize these changes.

e. Nurturing the new generation

Education is then seen as the most appropriate approach to turn the country around. But for whom should education be implemented? The first step would be to educate the adults, so that they can transfer their knowledge to their children. The second step is to educate this young generation. But the harsh realities still exist as schools are deteriorating, training materials are insufficient, qualified teachers are scarce, and fundings for education are disappearing. Ocitti (1994) has proposed a model of indigenous education to supplement the formal education often carried out by the state. This indigenous education would be the family's responsibility, the large family unit in Vietnamese society. The village then may play a crucial role in implementing basic education. As the villagers' every move is monitored by the village, shaping the villagers' pattern from the very tender ages would be best left

to the village, provided that adult education has been achieved in turning out responsible village leaders. The success of the UNICEF sponsored programme of Home Based Day Care in the six communes of Hà Giang and Hòa Bình in North Viet Nam (Nguyễn, Bính T., 1995) speaks highly in favour of a basic education left in the hand of

community involvement, local pride and sensitive leadership, (which) are key factors in quality control and often overcome bureaucratic incompetence and financial slothfulness not to mention indifferent, ignorant officialdom at higher control levels. (Fraser, 199)

The Vietnamese consider their offspring as the continuation of themselves. Most of them would not hesitate to sacrifice their own well-being if this could ensure their children's. If they can see the school as the nurturing place where their children can grow to their full potential, the high costs of school building, textbook printing, teachers' honoraria would be gladly shared. In the past, teachers had always received precious gifts from their students' families such as the first fruit of the family orchard, and they were the first to be invited to a family gathering ... Children were always scolded if they did not pay due respect to their former school teachers. To create a nurturing atmosphere in the school is then the most important step toward a rewarding and efficient education. (Ray, 1995)

From this solid foundation of basic education in the village, the pursuit of a higher education in the cities or larger agglomerations could be sequentially put into place. For education is a lifelong process, and indigenous education is directed at the individual throughout his or her life-span, the ten or twenty-year period necessary to the implementation of this solution would not seem so long if this could bring about happiness to the whole population. Education then ceases to be *the pedagogy of the oppressed* to become *the pedagogy of hope*. (Freire, 1994)

If this philosophy is accepted as a guiding factor in the education's renewal, what could be a practical and realistic plan of action to muster the Vietnamese energy, power and resources to implement the solution? How can we rebuild the traditional structure of the Vietnamese family and village? What would be the costs of re-organizing the education system? How can we adapt successful examples from other countries to the Vietnamese environment? What would be the impact on curriculum, schooling, mobility and costs? The Vietnamese may learn from Lithuania in promoting democracy while maintaining national identity through a well balanced curriculum. (Bridges, 1997)

To summarize, the issue is to provide basic education and preparation for life to all members of the society without any physical, geographical or mental barriers. The identified problems are: unequal access, imbalance of services, uncoordinated planning and unnecessary political mystification. A possible solution would be an education system created by tapping the traditional moral resources, redefining the national structure, reforming the democratic participation and by nurturing the new generation. In light of the above elements, can an action plan be designed to realize the proposed solution?

5. An action plan

This action plan can be implemented while the family and village structures are being rebuilt. During the war the long-established social networks were destroyed. By using military and political pressures, both sides had uprooted a large number of people, mostly peasants, and transferred them from one area to another. The government should encourage these displaced people to return to their birth place, rekindle the bonds among villagers, develop the community sense and start hopefully a peaceful and prosperous life. Once the village structure is developed and re-established, the family structure would also emerge as the village's nucleus. Training of cadres and teachers can take place at the same time to provide the villages with the necessary qualified personnel. Four to five years would be needed for this development, one year for planning and a minimum of three years to train an adequate number of cadres and teachers as well as to provide adult basic training to those who will carry out the home-based education programme⁷. (Nguyen Thi Binh, 1995)

In the meantime, the organization of basic education can take place to provide equal access to all children (boys and girls) to attend compulsory education. In implementing this organization we must take into account the ability of each village, each province in building and maintaining local schools. We must also be aware of the many difficulties that girls (from urban, rural or ethnic-minority background) must face in obtaining an education. Gail Kelly's concerns must be taken seriously, and addressed in an optimum way according to the situation and the environment. Regular reviews should be planned to assess and improve education access for girls.

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a. Re-organizing the education system

The formal education system does not provide universal access to all members of the society because the scarcity of financial resources results in a lack of qualified personnel and a shortage of spaces. Non formal education complements the formal education as illustrated in table 3, and provides the compulsory general basic education. In the basic education system, the first level is family-based education.

Table 3

A three-tier basic education system

Age-group	Type	Education	Support agency
11-15	Dual form	State and private NGOs (religious/foreign...)	State
6-10	Dual form	Community-based (village)	Province *
0-5	Non formal	Family-based (family or unit of families)	Village

* State-funded/Province-monitored Mobile Education Teams to ensure equal access to education for remote and isolated areas.

Such an education can be non-formal and would require very little financing. The education officer of the village⁸ would support and monitor the educational activities. In urban areas, the unit closest to the village structure, usually a *phuong*⁹ would play the village role. In these urban areas the government controlled crèches and day care centres can carry out, with the government's blessing, this first level of education. But in rural or remote areas, this non formal education could only be left to the grand-parents, uncles, aunts ... whose role becomes very important. (Arayici, 1999)

The government, loyal to its communist ideology, may be reluctant to let grand-parents, especially in the South, teach the children because these men and women were not completely indoctrinated and may stray from the communist ideology. However our hope is that the Vietnamese government would set the Vietnamese people's interest on a higher priority than the party's interests.

The next level is community-based education, in which non-formal education can be blended with formal education. The support and monitoring agency would ideally be a provincially elected board of education.¹⁰ The third level is more formal than non-formal. Here the private schools would share the educational burden with the state. Private schools could be run by religious orders and the children of this age-group may already be equipped to resist incidental indoctrination. The state would be the support and monitor agency and in this role may act as the protector of children's rights in religious matters. Lessons from well-run Koranic schools in Mauritania, Buddhist schools in Thailand and Kampuchea, Catholic schools in the Philippines could be learned and put to practice. Except for Koranic schools, Buddhist and Catholic schools have flourished in Viet Nam, especially in South Viet Nam until 1975 (Tran, 1994). The revival of these schools would not be expensive and could be a rapid and efficient step towards a healthier education system.

Table 4
A three-tier adult or remedial education system

Skill level	Type	Education	Support agency
High	Dual form	State and private NGOs (religious/foreign...)	State
Medium	Dual form	Community-based (village)	Province *
Low or nil	Non formal	Cooperative-based (village)	Village

* State-funded/Province-monitored Mobile Training Teams to ensure equal access to education for remote and isolated areas.

In adult education, the learners are divided into groups according to their skill levels, and enrolled where upgrading can reasonably take place. There is no label of vocational training or literacy education in the chart as both types are interwoven to prepare the adult learners not only for work and employment but also for fully living their human destiny. This education provides adult literacy and

remedial for drop-outs and would go beyond these needs to prepare the learners for their future roles of teachers in the cooperative-based or community-based units of education. In the structures given in tables 3 and 4, local communities and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have a very important role.

Local community leaders and local NGOs are responsible for promoting the program, preparing training places, selecting participants and proposing candidates for training courses, as well as supporting program implementation and follow-up. (O. Corvalán-Vásquez, 4152)

Successful adult education projects could serve as models, especially the Nai Roshni Schools in Pakistan and the Gandhi Basic Education Project in India (Hamadache, 4135). These examples are selected because the environments from which they were spawned are similar to the Vietnamese society. The kibbutz's school system is not a suitable example as Viet Nam lacks support from its overseas communities. Woodside's suggestions (1983) regarding non-formal schools should be examined, to avoid the observed shortfalls, and to maximize the appropriate impacts.

b. Establishing new curricula

O. Corvalán-Vásquez (1994) remarked that in Chile, the Vocational Training Program has shown that education innovations in education for work can be relevant to unemployed and underemployed youth from rural and urban slums. (p. 4152)

As close to 70% of the work force is dedicated to agriculture, non-formal education's flexibility would be stressed in rural areas while more formal education could be found in urban areas. This flexibility should be reflected in the design of curricula, which should be geared to the local labour requirements. The new education system may not encourage the mobility of employment when family and village structures need to be firmly established.

During the first few years, curricula must be easy to follow to accommodate the newly trained home-based teachers. National prestige may suffer because with these curricula, the new education may turn out a good quantity of average achievers and few geniuses. However, truly gifted students may pursue higher education abroad.

Curricula also need to be adaptable to balance national standards with local needs. This would help to foster the successful transfer of students from one area to another in the country. Along with

this adaptability lies the practical aspect of the curricula. Students in a coastal zone may not need more emphasis on forestry than students in the highland, and more time can be devoted in the former group to coastal navigation or marine biology. Literacy must have an important place in the curricula, as farmers, fishermen, and all others workers need to understand products' labels, contract's clauses, user's manuals ... At the proper levels, foreign language learning should focus on the languages spoken in neighbouring countries. A traditionally weak point in Vietnamese teaching is that critical analysis is never stressed. The authority does not encourage criticism and often uses education as a mould to shape passive and obedient citizens. This concern should be addressed in the curricula to be designed.

As curricula provide the foundation for text-book production, they should be kept consistent for a reasonable period of times. Where small changes are necessary, instead of rewriting a completely new book, an addendum should be provided to all who have proof of purchase. This would eliminate the costs for printing new textbooks, reduce the use of paper and promote an economically and ecologically sound approach. When inflation rate is reduced and controlled, students could be asked to contribute a small portion of the printing cost. This would also help in building the school's library, a virtually non existent service in Viet Nam.

c. Addressing the mobility issues

Double shift schooling as in many developed countries can maximize the use of school buildings. The local climate needs to be considered as a midday rest may be a necessity rather than a luxury. Sufficient time should be allocated between shifts to accommodate this requirement. School schedules must take into account the main economic activities within a particular area. La Belle (1994), noted that

When pupils are obliged to work or to perform some domestic tasks, school schedules can be adjusted accordingly.

This also motivates parents to let their children go to school as they can be sure that their children will be able to help them when needs arise. If education cannot be a hope for immediate financial return, it should not be an unbearable burden on the family.

As for mobility, smaller schools should be built and staffed in rural and remote areas. The new size would make the school creation more affordable. Teacher-training should also be geared to prepare teachers to be more flexible to adapt themselves to the situation. Mobile education teams and mobile

training teams can be created to bring education and training to remote or isolated areas. With flexible curricula and field training aids, these teams would come to the highland or islands and set up education or training units to suit the local needs. To paraphrase in reverse a popular saying, this is likely that "If the mountain cannot come to us, we'll come to the mountain". The mobile teams require good planning and good communications, and would not impose the Kinh's (the main Vietnamese ethnic in the country) upon highlanders or islanders. Another concern requires the government to be consistent and continuous in its efforts, for half-measures would end in frustrated and fruitless results.

The government of Nepal has been successful in developing an effective non-formal education literacy pedagogy, combined with a set of printed materials (called Naya Goreto) but it has still not effectively answered the question of what evolves after the initial literacy curriculum. No established curricula for continuing education. (Udaya & Keith, 103)

d. Concretizing cost efficiency

How could such an ambitious project be provided with the required financial and human resources? Open book accounting, with the participation of the whole population, would meet the financial requirement. Most parents would voluntarily invest their savings to secure a better future for their children if they can partly, directly or indirectly, participate in the management of the funds.

This management should look for practical, not prestigious spending, even if the funds come from foreign sources. The fiasco of the Thang Long Bridge, a multi-million dollars construction over the Red River to serve a miserable number of forty trucks and less than a hundred pedestrians a week would serve as a good reminder. The military service that drafts young adults into the armed forces could be changed into a community service. Young adults will serve the mandatory period, not with guns in hands but pens or pieces of chalk and slate boards. Mobile teams could be staffed with these young recruits. Examples from the Sub-Sahara African states, Sri-Lanka, Turkey should be examined, and adopted with appropriate modifications to attain the optimum cost versus effectiveness in education and training. (Arayici, 1999; Tilak, 1999; Mehrota, 1998)

In formal education, salaries and honoraria consume the greatest part of the budget. By mobilizing the support of the villagers and the NGOs, these costs could be reduced, as

in the Pamong school system in Indonesia, village members are used as instructors, teaching in available settings and using self-instruction modules. (Hamadache, 4133)

Costs could be further reduced if the NGOs play a greater role in education (formal and non formal)

The NGOs provide many of the relief and development services that government do, including adult education, but they do so outside government program and priorities. They are viewed as more efficient and effective than government agencies because they are less bureaucratic and (more) practical. (Ahmed, 4146)

The ball is now in the government's court. Will the SRV's government come to grasp that Marxist-Leninism is not the road to prosperity and will never be the way to free the Vietnamese population from poverty and from economic and political oppression? Will the SRV's government live up to its promise to serve as a government from the people, by the people, and for the people and thus, let the Vietnamese people decide their own destiny, making their own choice for a nurturing education through sharing and caring? Will the SRV's government apply in all sincerity and integrity the proclaimed principles of *Doi Moi* [Renewal] (Huynh, 1989, Fraser, 1991), to rebuild faith and trust and to respect the true will of the nation? Failing all that, the SRV can only continue its downward path toward a final and unavoidable crash. (Williams, 1992)

6. Conclusion

For Viet Nam, the educational problems has been diagnosed, and a solution proposed. The solution may be seen as a paradoxical return to ancient traditions, and not a step toward modernization. However, if we accept a different definition of happiness, if we accept a different evaluation tool to measure human success and achievement, the solution would not fare badly in promoting a harmonious life for the homebound and not so materialistic Vietnamese (Lê, 1993, Toan Anh, 1983). Wealth and power may come and go, would it be preferable to have inner peace and moral contentment of a life well spent and the assurance of a continuity of this peace and contentment far into future generations of humankind? For the government, there are new challenges and new tests. For the Vietnamese, will they still agree with Trang Tzeu that: *life span is limited, but life-long learning is limitless*, and forsake temporary wealth to seek the eternal consciousness of their human destiny?

Notes

1. Combined from UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1999, and The Canadian Global Almanac, 1999.
2. Lambert, in her article lamented (p. 606) with the SRV's government that higher education's share in the national budget was not high enough. At 2 percent of the total national budget (education is allocated 11 percent of the total national budget) higher education received the lion share compared to primary and secondary education. Over 16 million students at these two levels received only 9 percent of the budget, while the other 2 percent were for 300,000 university students (Lambert's number, the UNESCO Statistical Yearbook put the number at 500,000). In reproducing the table on Higher education institutions in Viet Nam, 1991 from Sloper and Le Thac Can (pp. 608-10), Lambert did not point out the omission of the official document in reporting the establishing date of universities and colleges in the South. In this document, all HCM City (Saigon) institutions were listed as established from 1976 onward (only the HCM City Institute of Medicine was listed as being established in 1964 - an obvious error from Sloper and Le Thac Can). In fact (and Lambert did mention it earlier, page 601) that universities were established in South Viet Nam around 1955. However Nguyen Quoc Thang, in his book published in 1993, in Hochiminh City (Saigon), indicated that the Faculty of Medicine and of Pharmacy (University of Hanoi) was established in Hanoi in 1930, had two equal centres, one in Hanoi, and one in Saigon in 1949, both training medical doctors and pharmacists. The University of HCM City (formerly the University of Saigon) was established in 1955, the University of Hue, in 1957, the University of Dalat (Catholic), in 1958, the University of Cantho, in 1966. The National Architecture Institute was established in 1927 in Hanoi, and moved to Dalat in 1928, then to Saigon in 1957 to become a faculty within the University of Saigon. Teacher College in Qui Nhon was established in 1955 (Doan Them, p. 165) Two religious-oriented universities: Van Hanh (Buddhist), established 1965 in Saigon, and Hoa Hao, in 1973, in Long Xuyen, South Viet Nam, (a Buddhist sect) were abolished after 1975. (Nguyen Quoc Thang, chapter 7, pp. 225-58)
3. See note 7 in Tran, 1994.
4. The 1989 census defined as *literate* "a person who knew how to read and write, and understood simple sentences in his or her national or foreign language", while for the 1979 census, all persons attending or ever attended school were considered to be literate.
5. The Education Committee asked for an increase of funds for education from two to ten per cent of the national budget during the 1988 National Assembly session. The request was turned down.
6. It is not blissful to have good memory in Viet Nam. The author remembered that in January 1978, while in a re-education camp, he read in the newspaper (Nhan Dan = The People) about the victorious achievement of the province Ha Nam Ninh which exceeded by 42% the Party's projection in rice production during the winter harvest. In September, the same official journal carried another article about Ha Nam Ninh which opened with "Despite the difficulty the province faced during the last winter harvest when only half the projection figure could be

attained, the province has overcome all obstacles to exceed by a large margin, this Fall quota of production." This sort of self-contradiction abounded in government reports. It is certainly not good food for thought for any persons who, like the author, can remember well what they read on an empty stomach.

7. The timing is based on the success story of the Home Based Day Care Centres (Nguyễn Thi Binh, 1995), in Viet Nam.
8. In the former village structure, the highest ranking villager is the *huong ca*, representing the village and can be compared to the chairman of the village council, the second person is the *huong chu*, the council's chief executive officer. The third is the *huong su*, in charge of education. In 1940, the *huong su*'s stipend was fixed at 20 piastres a month, a skilled journeyman, five piastres for a 60-hour working week. In 1942, a soldier was only paid 0.4 to 0.5 piastre a day (Chinh Dao, p. 45 & p. 137)
9. *Phuong* has a slightly different organization. The education officer, *Uy viên giáo dục* is an equal member of the *phuong* administration committee but carries the same duties as those of a *huong su*. While in the village, the council comprised almost entirely of men, often the *phuong*'s administration committee has more women than men as its members. (Toan Anh, 1983)
10. Viet Nam has fifty provinces and three municipalities. Only Hochiminh City which has a population of over three million may require more than one board.

APPENDIX A

Table 5^a
Population, Area, and Density^b

	El Salvador	Germany	Haiti	Indonesia	Philippines	Sri-Lanka	
Population	5,828,987	83,536,115	6,731,539	206,611,600	74,480,848	18,553,074	5
Area (km ²)	20,879	354,218	27,486	1,904,504	297,760	65,103	
Density	279	236	245	108	250	285	

Table 6
Pre-primary education - 1992^c

	El Salvador	Germany	Haiti	Indonesia	Philippines	Sri-Lanka	
Schools	2,412	43,552	N/A	40,257	4,201	N/A	
Teaching Staff	5,129	137,330	N/A	94,416	9,644	N/A	
Pupils	134,074	2,402,776	N/A	1,660,295	397,364	N/A	
Teachers/School	2	3	N/A	2	2	N/A	
Pupils/School	56	55	N/A	41	95	N/A	
Teacher/Pupils	26	17	N/A	18	41	N/A	

Table 7
Primary education - 1993^c

	El Salvador	Germany	Haiti	Indonesia	Philippines	Sri-Lanka
Schools	4,068	17,910	7,306	173,921	35,087	9,664
Teaching Staff	37,989	223,235	26,208	1,296,103	320,634	70,008
Pupils	223,235	3,804,887	555,433	29,876,198	10,731,453	2,012,702
Teachers/School	9	12	4	7	9	7
Pupils/School	55	212	76	172	306	208
Teacher/Pupils	6	17	21	23	33	29

Notes:

a. The countries in the tables are selected either as neighbouring states, or as having a similar population density.

b. Source: Brunner, 1999. *The Time Almanac*, 2000.

c. Source: UNESCO, 1999. *Statistical Yearbook*.

Remark:

Only Viet Nam has a very high Pupils/School average in both pre-primary and primary education. This may point to an imbalance of educational services between urban and rural areas, and or to a highly centralized system. In any case, this high average may signal that access to education needs to be improved. Haiti, El Salvador and Sri-Lanka provide their pupils with much better access and can be good examples as they are not placed among the developed countries. Pupils in the Philippines are also better served (same geographical area, climate, larger student population, with an average of 208 pupils per school, while in Viet Nam, the average is 965 pupils per school). Even Germany with a much better transportation system, only averages 208 pupils per school.

Table 8
Number of students and allotted budget

Country	Primary		Secondary		Tertiary		Rati		
	Students	%\$	Students	%\$	Students	%\$	1	2	
Germany	3,859,490		8,382,335	72.2	2,131,907	22.5	14.83	151.72	8
Haiti	555,000	53.0	184,968	19.0	6,288	9.0	0.84	1,071.43	9
Indonesia	29,236,283		14,209,974	73.5	2,303,469	24.4	5.03	485.09	9
Philippines	11,902,501	55.9	4,888,246	23.3	2,022,106	18.0	10.75	167.44	8
Sri Lanka	1,843,848		2,314,054	74.8	63,660	9.3	1.51	615.89	9
Thailand	5,927,902	33.9	3,925,923	20.0	1,332,767	16.4	11.91	137.70	8
Turkey	6,389,060	43.0	4,760,892	22.0	1,434,033	34.7	11.40	304.39	8
Viet Nam 1	10,431,300	38.0	5,995,300	26.0	509,300	22.0	3.01	730.90	9
Viet Nam 2	10,431,300	38.0	5,995,300	26.0	300,000	22.0	1.79	1,229.05	9

%\$: Percentage of allotted money for each level in the educational budget.

Ratio 1: Percentage of tertiary education students over total number of students.

Ratio 2: Percentage of budget allotted to one unit of tertiary students.

Ratio 3: Percentage of primary and secondary students over total number of students.

Ratio 4: Percentage of budget allotted to one unit of primary and secondary students.

Ratio 5: Number of primary and secondary students whose expenditure cost equal to one tertiary student.

Viet Nam 1: Using UNESCO figure of tertiary level students.

Viet Nam 2: Using figure of tertiary level students as reported by J. Lambert.

Viet Nam has the highest cost per tertiary level student in Southeast Asia. The reason is for a calculated elitism, as a vast majority of tertiary students are party cadres or party members' children. This is viewed as perpetuating the ruling class, through elitist education.

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